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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

1. Volunteer leaders are the most important people in America. Volunteer leaders and the citizen organizations in which they work are basic to democracy in America. Millions of man hours are devoted yearly by hard working and willing people to wholesome community services of various kinds.

2. Leadership is influencing or producing growth in a person or group. Thus, leadership is far more than simply possessing a lot of nice traits like ambition, courtesy, speaking ability, etc. These are fine, but in themselves alone do not make a person a leader.

Leadership springs from situations, especially group situations where somehow there has been an expression of feelings giving rise to a leader. The beginning of leadership development occurs when someone is asked to do something for his organization, or is elected by a group, or where a crisis or problem gives rise to some person who heads up some new project.

3. There are two basic philosophies of leadership: (a) the democratic philosophy and (b) the autocratic or authoritarian philosophy. Every citizen exerts leadership somewhere between these two extremes.

Below are some verbs about leadership activity which indicate one or the other of these two types of leadership philosophy:

push	represent	run group
order	encourage	respect
pull	inspire	report
teach or show	dictate	force
influence	help	preside
direct	instruct	guide

Which of these verbs describe how you serve as a leader in your groups? It depends upon which philosophy of leadership dominates your actions and how much. The best leaders are those who perform their work by the democratic philosophy rather than by the autocratic philosophy.

The first essential to the success of any organization is that it be guided by leaders who function the democratic way. This is also essential to true happiness and to fundamental democracy in the community, in the Nation and in the world, even in the family.

4. Leaders may be classified into several types based upon the kinds of jobs they do:

- a. Organization leaders. By this we mean the persons who are the officers and committee members of groups and programs.



- b. Project or teaching leaders. Persons whose job it is to give leadership to certain extension projects or programs and to teach or put on lessons in these projects to home demonstration groups, 4-H Clubs and others.
- c. Informal or indirect leaders. This is the kind of leadership which has influence but which may or not be in an official position. They are the key persons to whom others look for approval before going ahead on something. They are the persons who "carry weight" or whose word "counts." Every neighborhood or group usually has one or two of such persons.

5. Finding more helpers and leaders. Quite often we worry too much about "finding" leaders. If we cannot find persons to do jobs immediately then we get discouraged and think that there are no leaders any more in our communities.

But "the woods are full" of persons who can be leaders. Every person is a potential participant and every participant is a potential leader. The big job is to start interest and development; to start persons up the leadership ladder. Many people would be glad to help in some way if we would only have the nerve and take the time to ask them, and have faith that they can do it.

The greatest thing about finding and developing leadership is faith in people. Give folks a chance. Show that you have confidence in them. No one will be a perfect leader in the beginning. Leadership takes development and growth and cooperation.

6. Recognition and encouragement are essential to good leadership. Every person has a certain desire for recognition, and leaders and workers deserve it. The important thing is that the recognition be of the right kind and in the right way, and don't overlook anybody. Good leaders don't try to grab all the credit. But recognition is essential and everyone who works should have a fair share.

Probably the best form of recognition is simply encouragement and a heartfelt "thank you." Avoid putting persons in a show-off position as it might be embarrassing. Feeling of accomplishment is a main basis for satisfaction. Help others to see accomplishments.

7. Leadership selection. Selection of leaders and helpers by the group is often basic to their development into better leaders. It often encourages one to take more part. But elections are frequently mishandled and result in the wrong persons being elected. Nominations and elections should be done with great care, and with both what is good for the person and for the group in mind. Turnover of leaders is essential to good leadership development.

Many times persons elected turn out to be better than first expected. Groups will elect the right people if the proper care is given and the right situation is set up. Leadership develops from small beginnings; it is not necessarily something that one already has or is born with. A good rule to follow is to elect as much as possible and appoint as little as necessary.

8. Leaders should also be good followers. Some responsibilities of followers are:

- a. Respect other leaders.
- b. Be constructive, not just destructive.
- c. Be willing to help; to lend a hand, to do a part.
- d. Be willing to have a smaller part after having had a big job; to step down from president to active participant. To continue support of a group even though no longer a head person.

9. The main things to be a good leader are:

- a. Be humble. Everyone's every idea is worthy of consideration.
- b. Follow the democratic philosophy. Take your group along every step of the way. Keep the group informed.
- c. Serve wholeheartedly.
- d. Don't be afraid to change your mind.
- e. Have some objectives or goals in mind for the job you are in.
- f. Help others start up the leadership ladder.
- g. Care for other people; have love.

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* "The health of a democratic society *
*may best be measured by the quality and *
*quantity of the volunteer leadership *
*which it produces" - - Anon. *
* * * * *

"An open mind leaves a
chance for someone to
drop a worth-while thought
in it." - - - - - Anon.



